

September 16, 2007

Complete in Christ: A Study in the Book of Colossians

A Seat at the Table for You

Colossians 1:1-8

Pastor Bryan Clark

William Randolph Hearst was an avid art collector who had millions and millions of dollars in artwork. On one occasion he read about a series of paintings that so intrigued him he had to have them. So he hired someone to search the world to find them and to spare no expense in purchasing them. So this person traveled the world, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars and finally located the series of paintings. They were buried beneath piles of junk in a warehouse owned by William Randolph Hearst. He actually had what he was looking for.

When I read that story, I thought to myself: *Is that ever true of us? Is it possible that many of us find ourselves searching for what we already have?* I think if many Christians were to be honest, we would say, “Okay, I understand the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. I have my ticket to Heaven, but it feels like there’s still something missing.” We would say that we think Jesus is sufficient, but oftentimes our lifestyles give us away. We give clear evidence we’re still looking for something. But what if it were possible that what you’re looking for you actually already have, you just don’t understand it?

Over the next several months, we would like to take you on a guided tour of the most amazing warehouse that houses the fabulous riches that are yours in Christ. And I would suggest to you whatever you’re searching for if you have trusted Jesus as Savior you actually already have it – if you could just understand that.

If you have a Bible this morning, I’d invite you to turn with us to the book of Colossians. Over the next several months, we’ll work our way through this book. First, a little bit of background information: When Paul was in Ephesus for three years – Acts chapter 19 – and was presenting the gospel there, there were two men that came up from the city of Colossae about 80-100 miles inland. One was named Epaphras; one was named Philemon. They heard the message of the gospel; they believed it was true; they trusted Christ as Savior; and they went back to the city of Colossae and there established the church of Colossae in the home of Philemon. There’s a New Testament book by that name which we will study right at the end of our study of Colossians that’s going to put the whole story together.

Colossae was at one time a thriving city, but by this time was kind of a two-bit town. This letter was written about A.D. 60 to A.D. 62 by the apostle Paul from a Roman prison. The city of Colossae was an interesting city. It was a collection of Jewish legalists, of pagan worshipers that worshiped more of a kind of an Eastern mysticism type of religion, and then just the beginning of what would have actually been called Gnosticism which was a Greek religion. All these ideas were kind of melted together into a false teaching often referred to as “the Colossian heresy.” It’s really hard to define exactly what that heresy was. I don’t think anybody knows quite for sure. The best way I think for us to understand it is, as we encounter it through the book of Colossians, to identify what Paul was trying to correct.

Epaphras went and visited Paul in a Roman prison cell, explained to him his concerns that these false teachers are really starting to confuse the believers, and they’re not sure what’s true and what’s not true. And so Paul writes this letter back to help them understand the truth concerning the sufficiency of Christ and all that is theirs in Christ.

With that by way of background, pick it up in chapter 1 verse 1:

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
(Colossians 1:1; *NASB)

It was typical in the first century when you wrote a letter to identify yourself right at the front of the letter. So Paul identifies himself as the author of the letter. He's an apostle of Jesus Christ, not by his own choice but by the will of God. And then identifies Timothy as his partner in ministry.

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. (v. 2)

He writes this to the saints and to the faithful brethren, or the faithful believers. Now, there's a lot of confusion about this term "saints" – what does that mean? Right now you're hearing a lot of discussion in the news related to the Catholic Church trying to determine whether or not Mother Teresa should reach saint status, and that's how a lot of people think about it. It's kind of this all-star team, the best of the best based on religious performance.

But that's not how the Bible uses the term at all. The Greek word is a word that simply means "set apart". Every single person who has trusted Jesus as Savior is set apart for God and is considered by New Testament terms a saint. That's what the term is referring to here.

The idea of "faithful believer" is that word "faithful". It's a word that means "to take a stand". So you've got these people who are set apart for God, they're wanting to take a stand for Jesus, but they are getting confused by the false teachers among them.

He says, "**the faithful brethren** [faithful believers] **in Christ who are at Colossae.**" I think the English translation really misses the word play here. In the Greek language, it actually says, "In Christ in Colossae," and as soon as I say that, you hear the tension point there. To be "in Christ" is a very important term because it defines the basis by which all of these riches in this warehouse belong to you. On the basis of God's grace, if you've trusted Jesus as Savior, you are in Christ. So if we were to put a sign over this warehouse that houses all these riches, the sign would say, "In Christ." If you've trusted Jesus as Savior, these riches are automatically yours.

So you are in Christ. And in the months to come, we're going to try to understand what that means. But the challenge is really not in understanding what it means to be in Christ in the auditorium. The problem is when you walk out these doors and you try to figure out: *What does it mean to be in Christ in Colossae?* in their case – in our case, *to be in Christ in this world, in Lincoln* – in wherever you call home because there are these two competing environments. There are these two conflicting value systems. So it's really hard to understand: *What does it mean to be in Christ in this world?* So that's what we're going to try to accomplish in the months ahead, to try to define "in Christ in this world."

Then he closes the introduction with familiar words:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father. (v. 2)

This whole book is going to be about grace. It's going to be about "on the basis of grace, this is what God has given to you." And out of that grace flows peace. The wording is important here. You can never really experience the peace of God until you begin to comprehend the grace of God. The peace of God always flows out of an understanding of His grace. And so with that in mind, verses 3-8 in the Greek language is really just one long run-on sentence. It just kind of meanders its way

through these series of thoughts, so with that in mind we're going to try to understand it that way and just work our way through it. Verse 3:

We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus (vs. 3-4a)

I do think it's interesting that Paul opens the letter by saying he's praying for them. Now remember, they're free. He's in a Roman prison. He doesn't know what his fate is going to be.

Now be honest. If you were sitting in a prison cell and you were writing to people back home that are free, would you say, "I'm praying for you," or would the opening line be, "Hey, please pray for me"?

I mean, it is just a reminder of Paul's focus and his faith. He's very concerned for these people; he loves these people; and the opening line is, "Hey, I'm praying for you and I'm very thankful for you."

What is he thankful for? Well he lists three things here: **"praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus"**. The first thing he's thankful for is their faith in Christ Jesus. Now, when he says that, he's not limiting that to just the fact that they've embraced the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. He's talking about their faith, the fact that they are in Christ, all of these riches, all of these magnificent truths that we're going to talk about are automatically theirs in Christ. When he understands that they've trusted Jesus as Savior, he understands something radical has happened within these people, that they have been radically changed.

It's very important for us to understand whenever someone has trusted Christ as Savior, there is something absolutely radical that has happened, something miraculous. As a matter of fact, Jesus searching for words to describe it could only say, "You've been born again." Just because the culture has laughed and mocked those words doesn't mean that they aren't radical in their terminology. You have actually been born again. Your old nature has been eradicated. The nature of Jesus, now, is within you and the very presence of God is within you. It's something very miraculous that's happening to you. So much so that Jesus promised that, "I'm going to finish what I started in you – guaranteed." Every single person that has trusted Jesus as Savior one day will be complete in Christ. You will be more magnificent than you can even begin to imagine today, and that is yours as a gift of God's grace.

So when Paul says that he's thankful for their faith, he understands he's saying all of that. Understanding the implications of that in everyday life is so important. I remember years ago kind of coming to grips with this in my own life, and for example, seeing how this plays out in my parenting style – really understanding if I believe this, then I have to understand when one of my daughters has trusted Jesus as Savior something miraculous has happened. They have actually had a born again experience, and their old nature has been eradicated. There is now the very nature of Jesus Himself, the very Spirit of God, the very presence of God dwelling within them. And God has promised, "I'm going to complete what I started in this child."

And if I really believe that – I mean if I *really* believe that – I understand my role as a parent is not primarily to try to fix my child, it is to celebrate my child. And those are two very different parenting styles. It's my faith that says, "God's doing something in this child more miraculous than I could ever do." And if I believe that with all my heart and my faith, then I'm going to celebrate that. I'm going to cheerlead that. I'm going to fan that flicker into a flame. And I'm going to watch

God do His thing. If I don't really believe God's going to do His thing, then I'm always trying to fix things and that never really works very well.

If you take that same principle and apply it broader to us as a church, if we really believe this – if we believe that once a person trusts Jesus as Savior something miraculous is going on that God has promised He's going to complete – we need to be characterized as a church far more as people who celebrate and people who affirm than people who are always trying to fix one another. We don't really need to fix one another; we need to celebrate one another. We need to affirm one another. We need to help one another believe: *Man, something radical is going on inside of you. God has actually changed you. And He's promised to complete you. And you're going to be something magnificent. He promised.* And we celebrate that together. That's what Paul means when he says he's thankful for their faith. It encompasses everything we're going to talk about in the book of Colossians.

Second of all he says,

since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints (v. 4)

The second thing is the love that they have for all the saints. That's the second thing he's thankful for—because of what God is doing in their hearts, there is a supernatural love that's flowing out of them. Jesus Himself said, **“By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”** (John 13:35) It is this supernatural love flowing out of us that is supposed to be our identifying mark as followers of Jesus.

Now, it is interesting the way this is worded: **“Love... for all the saints.”** I find for me personally it's pretty easy to love *many* of the saints; it's a little bit harder to love *most* of the saints; and come on, let's be honest, it is a supernatural thing to love *all* the saints.

But then again, that is the point isn't it? That God has given us a supernatural ability to do what we otherwise couldn't do because that's what then identifies the presence of Jesus within us.

It is important to remember love defined by the Bible isn't an emotion. It's not saying you're going to feel something. It's an act of your will. It's a commitment. It's actually the polar opposite of a value system of a consumer culture in that a consumer culture is, “Serve me, serve me, serve me,” but the culture of Jesus is, “Serve others, serve others, serve others.” And that's the way by which we love one another.

If you want just a real practical application, I would suggest this morning you think of one person in your world that you find hard to love. It may be somebody under your own roof; it may be somebody at work; it may be a neighbor, whomever. One person that you find it hard to love and this week bend over backwards every way possible through the power of Jesus to serve that person expecting nothing in return. Serve that person expecting nothing in return. I would suggest to you by this time next week something will probably have changed. But that's our calling: to love as Jesus loved. And that's what Paul is thankful for. These people are loving all the saints.

Thirdly:

the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you, (vs. 4b-6a)

The third is this concept of hope. We're familiar with the triplet: faith, hope, love. But what's interesting is in this text, Paul has changed the order in order to make a theological point. It's faith, love, hope. And when he says, "because of hope," that's a Greek word that means "springing out of hope". In other words, what he's saying is, "this love that you have for all the saints is actually springing out of this hope you have in Jesus."

"Hope" defined by the Bible is different than our definition of hope. When we think of hope, we're thinking of wishful thinking. We're thinking: *I hope this happens. I hope this happens.* But in the Bible, hope is always a guarantee. It's always a sure thing. But it's always yet future. It's understanding that there is a better day. There is a place prepared for me. There is a life to come that is more magnificent than anything this world has to offer. And that is my hope. And it's not wishful thinking. It's a guarantee based on the truth of God. That's the good news.

It's very interesting when we talk about salvation how often we get stuck in past tense terminology. You hear it all the time. People say, "Well, yes, I was saved when I was ten," or "I was saved five years ago." Primarily that is what we talk about when we talk about salvation. But the New Testament talks about salvation in the past, salvation in the present, salvation in the future. Have been saved, am being saved, will be saved. And when the New Testament talks about these three tenses, you might be interested to know, the one they talk about the least is the one we talk about the most – that's past. And the one biblical writers talk about the most is the one we talk about the least, and that's the future.

One of the reasons for that is because in the first century, life was really hard and the idea of trying to make heaven on this earth was just a ridiculous thought. As hard as it was, it was significantly more difficult for those who had trusted Jesus as Savior. They were most often persecuted, life became much more difficult, and they understood that they were really about accomplishing the mission and just trying to survive day-to-day. The idea of trying to build heaven on earth was just silly to them. So what kept them going, what kept them driving – and this is really evidenced by the number of times this is talked about in the New Testament – was the reality that there is a hope for a better day. There is a new day coming. There is a place more magnificent than you can even imagine today. And so hang in there. Let's be about the mission. And there is a glory to come.

As a matter of fact, the terminology here is really interesting. When he says, "**because of the hope laid up for you**" that Greek word translated "laid up for you" is a word that means "to make a reservation." It means a sure thing. This is the word that would be used to describe if you were seated at the head table and you had a seat reserved at the table for you. So what Paul is saying here is what causes these people to live out their faith is this understanding that there is a seat at the table for you on the basis of God's grace. And because I know that is true, it changes the way I process everything this world throws at me because that seat at the table is absolutely, positively guaranteed for me.

Now imagine if you will this magnificent banquet table in Heaven. And imagine right now, today, at this very moment seated at that table is Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Paul, Peter, and at the head of the table is Jesus. But if you zoom in a little bit you do see there is an empty chair there. And as you zoom in a little bit tighter you see there is a name by a plate there. And the name is yours. And there is an understanding that: *There is a place at the table reserved for me seated with these people of faith down through history in the presence of Jesus forever.* That is really quite a remarkable thought.

Hebrews chapter 12 talks about the fact that there are these great people of faith out of chapter 11 that have already run their race, but now they've handed the baton off to you. And you run your race in front of a cloud of witnesses who are cheering you on. Imagine them seated at the table and the Abraham's and the Moses', and the Peter's and the Paul's are seated at the table. And they're watching and they're cheering. They are wanting you to be successful in accomplishing the assignment that you've been given. And they're longing for the day when you come take your seat at the table to be together forever. And that reservation is absolutely, positively, 100% guaranteed based on the grace of God.

When you really comprehend that, it is life-changing. It changes the way I talk. It changes the values. It changes my priorities. It changes what I'm living for as I begin to understand this marvelous truth that whatever this world throws at me I will process it with the understanding that there is a better day coming. And there is a seat at the table for me, and this world can never take that away.

Several years ago, when Patti and I were living back in Broken Bow, Patti left with her sister to go to Montana for several weeks of vacation. She took Ashley with her. And they were up around the Bozeman area. About a week later, her brother-in-law was going to come through from Kansas, pick me up, and we were going to go up there. And we were going to spend a couple of weeks there trout fishing in the mountains. You know, just a wonderful time together. So it happened to be the evening that the brother-in-law was going to come through, was going to pick me up, so I was really checking out mentally. I was looking forward to a couple of weeks in the mountains, and fishing, and seeing Patti and Ashley again. And that's really the frame of mind I was in.

I decided to take a bath just to wake up a little bit. He was going to come through about 10:00, drive through the night, and then on through the next day. So I started some water, and about that time somebody out front honked a horn. I went out and there was somebody that wanted to talk. So we began to talk. Well, we had quite a lengthy conversation.

And when he finally left, I went in the house and as soon as I opened the door I remembered. I remembered because there was water in the living room, water in the hallway, water in the bedroom. So I ran to the bathroom, I turned off the bathwater. And immediately I could hear it just pouring through the cracks in the floor into the basement. So I went down to the basement. And everywhere you looked in the basement, water was just cascading from all of the holes in the floor above. It was just an absolute mess.

And I remember my reaction was I just laughed. Had that been any other day, I probably would have been very frustrated. But my frame of mind was such that I thought: *Man, I am outta here, and I really don't care!* I went around, unplugged whatever I thought needed to be unplugged. And I left for Montana theorizing, *When we get back in two weeks, it will be dry.*

When we got to Montana and I explained the story to Patti, she didn't quite see it the same way. But when we got back to Broken Bow, my theory had proven to be correct. Everything was dry. The fact that quite a few things had to be thrown out because of water damage is a minor technicality. But you know, I think about what happened that evening. I was so dialed in that I really wanted to be with Patti and Ashley. I'm looking forward to this vacation. I was completely checked out. And I thought: *I really don't care. I'm headed to another place.*

And I think that's why the New Testament writers talk about this seat at the table, this hope of the world to come so much. They want the believers to understand: *Hey, this isn't Heaven. This is a*

war zone and right now you need to be faithful to the mission understanding there is a better day coming. There is a day more fabulous, more magnificent than you can even begin to imagine today, and you have a seat at the table. And it's 100% guaranteed. It's yours. And if you know that and you believe that, then let's be about the business with our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Hebrews 11 tells that the great patriarchs of the faith kept walking by faith because they were looking for a better place. They were looking for a city whose designer and builder is God. And even though they never saw it, that was the driving passion of their lives. And so they were in the presence of God. And that's exactly what Paul is talking about. It's because these people have this hope of a better day that they're able to love one another that they're able to live out this faith walk in Colossae.

He goes on and says:

the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; (v. 5b-6)

Paul reminds them that this is the grace of God and this is the truth concerning the grace of God, and this is good news. It's important to remind ourselves the gospel is good news. The word itself means "good news." It's also important to remember that when Paul is saying the gospel, he's not just talking about three bullet points about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. He's talking about the entirety of what it means to be in Christ. It's all good news.

Sometimes people will say, "You know, I think we should present the gospel more," or, "I'm glad today we finally presented the gospel." And what they're talking about are kind of these three or four little bullet points that we've kind of pulled out and termed "the gospel." But that's not how the Bible defines that term. The gospel is Genesis to Revelation. It is the good news that includes the entirety of what God has said is true of you in Christ. Every time we open up this book, it is the gospel. This morning we are presenting the gospel – the good news of Jesus.

As we think about this idea of *Each One Reach One*, it's really important to remind ourselves: *Hey, it is good news.* Growing up in the fundamentalist movement, I really got the impression that it wasn't good news. It was bad news. And to really be a faithful witness you really have to let somebody have it. And you give them the bad news. And you kind of whack them. And it's kind of a painful process. And if you really do it right then it really hurts. And then you've been faithful to the truth. And that was kind of the impression that you got. And so it's no wonder that it wasn't really well received when people heard it.

But when you go back and begin to study through the New Testament, you find out that's not the way the gospel is presented at all. It's not bad news. It's good news. It's the most remarkable message of grace and forgiveness and salvation and mercy. And the reality is that no matter what this world throws at you, you have a seat at the table based on the grace of God. That's a remarkable truth. It is such good news I find myself thinking: *I can't wait to tell somebody. This is such good stuff!* So you really have to reorient your thinking a little bit when you think about sharing the message with somebody that this is really good news. Who wouldn't want to hear this?

What he says in verse 6 is really interesting as it relates to accomplishing the mission that God has given us. He says:

...just as in all the world also it [meaning this truth, the good news] is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it... (v. 6)

What he's saying there is, "What's happening in you is the same thing that's happening in people all around the world that's causing this explosion of the church of Jesus Christ. And what's happening is when this good news is understood – when this good news is believed by faith – it is producing, or bearing fruit in the life of the believer."

In other words, something in you is changing. The more you understand these truths and really believe them, the more they bear fruit in your life, the more something starts to change. You become a different person in how you talk, and how you think, and your values, and your priorities. And this truth is bearing fruit in your life to the degree that others around you see that and the truth is multiplied, then, in their lives. That is your witness.

When he says in the text that it is "increasing", it's a Greek word that means it's "multiplying" or "reproducing". In other words, what's happening in your life is so compelling, it's so contagious, that it reproduces itself in somebody else's life. And then in that person's life, in somebody else's life, and it just keeps multiplying out. And that's what's happening all over the world—that it's building this church of Jesus Christ.

It's exactly what we describe as the *People Loop* – the understanding that when somebody comes to faith in Jesus, they are brought in to the life of the church, and they are disciplined. And what is disciplining other than helping people understand who they are in Christ – for people to understand and believe these magnificent truths, this good news that begins to bear fruit? It begins to change us from the inside out. It makes us a different person. And because of that, when we go out, others become aware of that and it's so compelling and it's so contagious that that truth multiplies itself in their life. That person comes in, and the whole process starts over again. That's exactly what he's talking about.

There's a reminder to us as a church that according to the New Testament, the primary means of accomplishing the Great Commission is really not built around evangelistic events. It's not to say those are wrong or inappropriate, but they always are secondary to the primary strategy. An event is where one person is telling lots of people sitting out there the truth of the gospel. But at the end of the day, the primary strategy would be that the truth of Jesus Christ – the truth of what it means to be in Christ – is so radically changing you, bearing fruit in your life, that you become contagious to the people that you're around to the point where that truth reproduces itself in somebody else's life. And they begin to be disciplined. And the same thing happens in their life. And it just multiplies out all around the world. If we could only pick one verse in the entire New Testament that defines the *People Loop*, it would be Colossians 1:6. That's exactly what he's talking about.

He goes on, then, to identify Epaphras as the model of that. He says:

just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit. (vs. 7-8)

He's identifying Epaphras as the model of that. Epaphras came to Ephesus. He saw what was going on, and he believed because these people were being radically changed by the power of the good news. He went back to Colossae. And there as they began to understand and live out this truth it became contagious. And others believed. And then others believed. And then others believed, which grew the church in Colossae just as it's doing around the world.

As we think about this opening section of this wonderful book, I want to challenge you this morning with two questions that I just want you to answer honestly in your heart of hearts. The first question really is the big picture, and to ask you the question: Do you really believe in the sufficiency of Christ? What I'm asking is, do you really believe that Jesus is enough?

Now, I know what the right answer is. I'm not asking you if you know the right answer. I am asking you: Do you really believe that? Oftentimes we say we really believe that but our lifestyles give us away. We don't. We're still seeking. We're still searching. We're looking for something else. I just need to read one more book. *I just need one more formula. I just need one more technique.* And we give the impression that we don't really believe Jesus is enough.

I think there are a lot of Christians that would identify: *Yes, I believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, my ticket to Heaven, but I still feel like something's missing.* And it's evident by the way we often live our lives.

And I would suggest to you, you're not missing anything. You just don't understand that what you're looking for you already have. And if you'd be honest and say, "Yeah, I think that's me. I've kind of grown stale. I'm kind of stuck," all I'm asking is that you would diligently, passionately enter into this study over the next several months to better understand who you are in Christ, to understand the sufficiency of Christ, to go with us on this warehouse tour of these riches in Christ that you might really come to understand that Jesus is enough.

The second question I'd like to ask you is more specific to this text: Do you honestly believe there is a seat reserved for you at the table? Again, I know what the right answer is. I'm asking you: Do you really believe that? Do you really understand what that means? Do you really understand that there is a seat reserved for you at Jesus' table, and He's longing for the day when you've completed your assignment and you're home to take your seat at the table?

And you believe that to such a degree that no matter what this world throws at you, you will process it all through the understanding that this is not heaven – it's not supposed to be – but I am just a pilgrim passing through. And there is a better place and a better day. And I long to be there. But in the meantime, I've got a job to do. It will change how I talk. It will change how I act. It will change my values, my priorities; it will change everything about my life if I really truly believe that's true. It's only when we begin to really believe these truths that we will understand what it means to be in Christ in this world.

Our Father, we're thankful this morning that You are such a faithful, generous God. Lord, we understand that none of these riches that we claim this morning are ours because we've performed for them or because we deserve them. Lord, they are simply gifts of Your grace made possible through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Lord, I think if many of us were to be honest here this morning, we would say, "I've understood how to get my ticket to Heaven, but haven't really experienced a lot of growth since then. Lord, help us to understand that the good news goes far beyond just a ticket to Heaven. Lord, I pray that You would help us to believe these magnificent truths, that we might truly live out what it means to be in Christ in this world, that our lives would be so radically changed that we would become contagious, that the truth would reproduce in the lives of others who need to know Jesus. Lord, all this we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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Study Questions

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A Seat at the Table for You

Colossians 1:1-8

Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. Do you think most Christians are truly satisfied by their relationship with Christ or are they still seeking something more? Explain your answer.
2. Do you believe Jesus is sufficient for your every need? Why or why not? What does the sufficiency of Christ look like in everyday life?
3. Do most of us Christians give evidence of truly believing what we say we believe, or does there seem to be a gap between what we say we believe and how we live?

Bible Study

1. Read Colossians 1:1,2. What is the tension created by living “in Christ...at Colossae?”
In what ways do we feel this tension every day?
2. Why is an understanding of grace necessary to truly experience peace?
3. Read Colossians 1:3-8. Paul is thankful for the faith, love and hope evident in the lives of the believers in Colossae. Define what is meant by each of these three terms.
4. In what way does our love for all the saints spring out of our hope (knowing we have a seat at the table reserved in heaven for us)? In other words, what is the relationship between hope and how we live?

5. What is the gospel?

Do we tend to focus on the gospel as good news or bad news? If it's good news why do we hesitate to share it?

What is the result of believing the gospel of truth according to verse 6?

6. According to Colossians 1:6, what is the most effective strategy for evangelism?

Are people more likely to believe based on the presentation of the truth or the living out of the truth?

Who does Paul identify as a model of grace-living to the Colossians? In what ways?

Application

1. According to this text, what will be necessary for you to be an effective witness for Jesus?

What should be our number one focus to equip us for reaching others?

2. List five practical ramifications of truly believing that there is a seat at the table reserved in heaven for you?

3. What one thing from this text do you really need to remember and believe this week?

How would believing this truth affect your experiences this week?